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ABSTRACT

An individualized instruction program in which the teacher was able to be more highly involved with 350 students than she was in five conventional classes of 25 students each is described. The success of the Basic Writing Skills course at American River College, Sacramento, California, depends largely on the careful organization of course content, a testing policy in which the student is helped to succeed, and the use of instructional aides, most of whom are unpaid college students. A simple bookkeeping system enables the student to keep track of his progress, grades, and attendance. (CL)

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A DO–IT–YOURSELF KIT FOR INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION

by Helen Mills

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Costly - complicated - unmanageable. These are the reactions many teachers have to individualized instruction. They may have thought about it, perhaps even tried to organize a program, but they have discarded the idea after they have tried without success to get money to hire capable tutors and buy expensive hardware, much of which they really do not care to operate themselves. And they probably decide they have been wise when they think about how hard they work to try to get all their students to do the same assignments at the same times during the semester; they know they would never be able to let each student work on something different. What these teachers have to learn is that the individualized instruction program does not have to be more costly or more complicated than the conventional class if the teacher has appropriate materials, adequate assistance for which little or no money is spent, and a well-organized but simple "bookkeeping" system. What I have found in my Basic Writing Skills course at American River College, Sacramento, California, is that I have been able to be more personally involved and more highly productive as I have worked with as many as 350 students in a semester in my individualized instruction program the past three years than when I taught five conventional classes of 25 to 30 students a semester. Here are a few ideas about how the program was organized and how it works.

Writing Objectives

What to teach and how to teach it are decisions every teacher has to make as he begins a semester. Some methodically prepare lesson plans to cover the whole semester. Others make their plans after they reluctantly break away from a conversation with their colleagues five minutes before class begins. What they do not cover during the semester they might put on the final exam so that the students get at least a little exposure to some of the ideas.

Those who make detailed lesson plans might find another approach -- individualized instruction -- satisfying for them because course content has to be carefully organized to be effective. The hard work of writing specific objectives is completed before the course begins. They detail what each student is supposed to accomplish by the time he completes the course. Notice that I have said that "he is supposed to accomplish...", not that he will accomplish them. I have no way of knowing as he enters the course whether he wants to learn what I have to offer or whether he is able to do so. What I have done is identify the points of information about language structure and function that he should know if he expects to write expository essays competently. By writing *Commanding Communication*, a series of eight units, I have been able to present course material in a sequence students seem to follow well. Then I test the student so that *he* can see what he has accomplished and what he still has to learn. If he needs my help, I analyze his problems and suggest ways to study or items to be learned, but I cannot, and I will not, force him to learn. For those who find my class a bore (either because they lack the energy to do the work, because they know most of the material, or because they are incapable), I immediately try alternatives. Sometimes I provide writing exercises or urge them to write what they want and then show them how the course materials will help them overcome their problems that appear in their writing. Or I arrange to have them enroll in our paragraph writing course where they soon see the need for application of what I try to teach them. If they are incapable, sometimes mentally retarded, I try to help them improve their writing to fit the needs of the kind of education they want.

In writing the objectives for my course, I concluded with a summarizing statement that a student should understand the characteristics and function of written language and that he should be able to write grammatical sentences in Standard English and revise them. The

objectives themselves, about 75 of them, list what he should know about sentences: 1. He should be able to identify subjects and predicates. 2. He should be able to identify basic sentence patterns. 3. He should understand the function of modifiers. 4. He should be able to add modifiers to sentences. . . .

And so the list goes on through the entire contents of the course. For some courses it may be quite long, as many as 200 objectives. One of the best books to use as a guide while writing objectives is *Preparing Instructional Objectives* by Robert F. Mager, Ph.D. (Fearon Publishers, Palo Alto, California, 1962) because it is brief but specific and challenges the reader as he moves through it step-by-step.

For those who ask me why I have chosen to write objectives and why I insist on a certain level of accomplishment, I remind the questioners that students cannot use language effectively in writing unless they have some conception of what it is and how it functions. Many of those in my class have written very little. What they put on paper, then, is a verbatim rendering of their oral language which does not please them because it is not like the professional writer's. In addition, I point out that students face this test of accomplishment whenever they take a licensing examination to qualify them as automobile driver, as well as pilots, accountants, physicians, dentists, lawyers, contractors, architects, cosmetologists, x-ray technicians, nurses, and a variety of other professions. Before taking any of these examinations, the applicant must prepare himself by completing a prescribed course and then proving that he has accomplished the goals by passing a comprehensive examination. If he fails or does poorly on one segment, he has the opportunity to study and return to try the entire examination or a portion of it. When he finally passes it, he is then awarded his license. If a student in school does not experience this kind of accomplishment, the framework of his body of knowledge is weak, and significant segments are missing; as he tries to add more information, he cannot relate it logically to the scattered bits he may have acquired earlier. As he flounders through school, trying to appear knowledgeable, afraid to admit he does not know certain details, either he can become very withdrawn or he can label all the demands on him a bore and even become very hostile.

Writing the Tests

After the objectives have been written, the next step is to prepare a final exam which can consist of parts to be graded subjectively and objectively. One part of my final is objective -- one hundred items in five sections based on the structure of sentences and function of their parts. I ask students to identify parts of sentences, kinds of sentences, and locate the part of a sentence in which a problem may exist. These kinds of exercises test their awareness of the framework and parts of language which they should know if they are to be able to talk about and revise their own writing. (I can hear many teachers protest that this approach is rigid and that there is very little connection between grammar and writing. I agree; therefore, I do not teach "grammar." Instead we examine the characteristics and function of language, using a structural approach, and apply this understanding throughout the course to sentences. I have found it a good way to help the student build confidence in writing Standard English. Afterwards he feels free to experiment and be creative.)

The other two parts are writing exercises. In one I ask the students to combine as many as five short sentences about a single subject into one or two by using coordination, subordination, appropriate editing, and punctuation. These I grade according to guidelines I have established, but I allow as much leeway as possible. What is amazing is the infinite variety of sentences -- most of them acceptable -- that evolve. In the last part I list a series of topics, like photography, child care, car repair, sea farming, and ask students to originate five sentences about one of the topics. As I read both kinds of writing, I see quickly how comfortable they have become in writing. Some, in writing original sentences, use coordination and subordination well and even develop transition between sentences. Their five sentences have the coherence and unity of a paragraph. Others write short sentences, each individually acceptable, but they have more to learn if they are to write adequate paragraphs. My decision about whether they have achieved the objectives of the course is based mainly on these writings; I use the score on the objective part of the test to determine the student's strength in his knowledge of language function. The reason is that some, having been through the detail of the lessons, will suddenly be liberated and realize how language functions and how they can manipulate it, but they cannot explain why. These I pass without hesitation because they can discuss their writing with me. Others, expecially the foreign born learning English as a second language, will do very well on the objective section, but their writing is somewhat awkward, in need of refinement. I pass

these also with a detailed explanation of what they will have to watc h as they move into paragraph writing course. Most succeed, but some return to me for further help. A Japanese man went through my book twice, took the paragraph writing course where he struggled, returned to go through a fresh copy of my book, and returned to the paragraph writing course. He was determined to learn because he wanted a master's degree in English. The ones I do not pass are those who show little evidence of writing competence and, in addition, have low scores on the objective part of the final. I have explained the final exam in detail because I want to demonstrate that the instructor has to be flexible, yet consistent, if he is going to examine each student's accomplishment individually and fairly. He cannot use rigid, right-wrong testing devices if he has trully individualized instruction, but at the same time, he cannot deviate so far from his objectives that they become meaningless in evaluating a student's performance.

I can see this kind of approach used in paragraph or composition writing, but I can also see using a single prescribed piece of writing as a final exam if the student's writing up to that point has been carefully evaluated with him as he completes each of several assignments.

Students are generally pleased with this approach because they know where they stand and where they are going and can decide whether they want to go through all the detail.

When the final has been written, a pretest can be written to match the final in format. The pretest then can be administered to determine how much a student knows as he enters the course. It is pointless to teach him what he already knows, but it is vital to know where he needs review and what he does not know. In my course I give students the option of taking the pretest whenever they choose. If they feel they know nothing and want to go through the whole course, it is cruel to give them a test to prove to them they need the whole course. If they find the material simple, however, after they have completed a few lessons, I urge them to take the pretest to see whether they can eliminate some of the lessons.

Preparing the Units of Study

The final step - sometimes a long one - is developing the segments of the course

consisting of short lessons and quizzes to follow each segment to test accomplishment. Here the instructor has two choices: either he may set up assignments in the texts he uses in the course, or he may write all of his own material. This step-by-step test procedure is essential if the instructor is to know whether the student is progressing and where his weaknesses lie. Even with this detailed kind of evaluation, it is possible for a student to get to the end of the course and still have no overall view. This may happen for at least two reasons: either he has studied only to pass the individual quizzes and has not built his storehouse of information, or he has memorized answers for the quizzes by talking with "friends" and has little insight into objectives of the course. To help these kinds of people, I include original writing, more and more demanding, in each of the quizzes. If a student comes to the test room with canned answers memorized, he may pass the objective part of the test, but he quickly shows his lack of accomplishment when he cannot apply what he is supposed to have learned about sentence editing and rewriting.

In preparing the units of material, I have used different colors for the units and for the various tests. It is amazing how students respond to color. It is easy to tell them that they are ready for a test when they have finished the yellow section instead of referring to page or lesson numbers. If the tests are of particular colors, it is easy to glance over the room to see what each student is working on. Last year I used green for the A form of the quiz and pink for the B form, two distinct colors. Some students did not want to be seen with a pink test because they felt every one would know they needed more work on the lessons. This year I used buff for the A form and yellow for the B form, two colors close enough so that we are not getting the same reaction from the students.

Grading

I ask that students get 85 percent on each quiz before they go on to the next unit. This percentage allows about 15 percent for communication problems, but it also means that students must do better than average work if they expect to develop understanding of language. If they get less that 85 percent, I give them a Form B of the quiz after they have reviewed and received help from the tutors. For those who need more exercises I developed X-TRAS, practice exercises, very much like the ones in the book and on the quiz.

I do not average these grades in determining the final grade because for each step the students have had to reach a certain level of accomplishment. There is no reason to penalize them by averaging in the low scores. They receive a grade of B if their score is 85 to 94 percent on the final exam. They receive an A if it is 95 or 100 percent. They may raise the B to an A by tutoring 20 hours in the class. They may receive C if they complete all the quizzes but do not take the final. They may raise their grade to B by getting at least 85 percent on the final. And they may also receive a grade of B, even if they do not finish my course, by passing the paragraph writing course. What I have found is that many will complete six units, through subordination, move into paragraph writing and do well. It goes without saying that they have accomplished the objectives of my course as well as those of the paragraph writing course and should receive credit for both.

The only other grades I give are I (Incomplete) or W (Withdrawn). I do not give D because it indicates to me no accomplishment, and I do not give F because I do not fail any one. A student may not finish the course, or he may not work competently, but by my standards he has not failed; he has not achieved the objectives. If his work is satisfactory but incomplete when the semester ends, he receives I, and he can return the next semester to complete it. I built in this flexibility because students come in as late as the fourteenth week of the semester when they have finally decided that they cannot complete either paragraph or composition writing with credit.

Those who want to drop for any reason receive W, or I drop them if they do not attend for two weeks.

Testing

Setting the right atmosphere for testing is critical, and helping students develop the right attitude toward the tests is vital to their survival in class. So many of them have been defeated by tests that it is almost impossible for them, even when they are adequately prepared, to face these quizzes without apprehension and overwhelming fear.

Evidence of this is very apparent when a student will work arduously over the first unit and let week after week slip by without taking the test. He will even begin working in the second unit because he cannot make himself face the ordeal of the test. To help him

over this hurdle, the tutors and I talk with him and try to explain that the test will help both him and us sort out what he knows from what he does not know. We point out that if he can get 60 percent, he has only another 25 percent more to learn to pass the test. Looking at the test this way, he will often try. If he is still hesitant, we explain that he will have a second chance, even a third and fourth if he needs them (I have two Form A's and two Form B's for the first quiz but only one of each for the other quizzes.), and then he may consent to try. If he is still unwilling, we work with him on the X–TRAS. Usually we can make him feel that he can succeed, but we still have one or two, both men and women, each semester whose eyes fill with tears or who visibly shake as they agree reluctantly to take the test.

The students who really concern me are those who do not return to class after they have taken a quiz. It is hard to reach them once they disappear, even though I write them personal notes or call them at home. Therefore, it is imperative to work closely with them while they come to class to help them realize that they can learn the course material.

Another facet of this testing is to give the students enough time to work. Some are very slow, but if they have enough time, they can do a good job. We are, after all, testing their knowledge, not their speed.

If they do not finish a quiz in one hour (The quizzes take the well-prepared student about 15-20 minutes.), they can turn in their tests and return the next day to complete them. Some instructors may object to this because they believe the student will read all the quiz questions, then look up the answers when he gets outside of class. I agree he may do this, but in the process he has to look for the answers with some understanding of what the questions are asking, and he has to formulate answers. Is this not learning?

If the student has difficulty while he is taking the test, we help him as much as we can without giving him the answers. We urge him to use his dictionary as much as he wants to look up spelling, noun plurals, or verb forms, while he takes the test. If he is obviously unprepared, we suggest he study lessons related to the exercise causing problems. If he is apprehensive, we may help him go through the whole quiz with the understanding that it is a practice quiz and that he will have to take another form.

When he hands in the quiz, we glance over it to make sure that he has understood all the parts. If he has not followed directions, we go over them with him and ask him to

revise that section. If he has already left the room, we save the quiz until the next day and have him work on it when he returns.

Does all of this procedure sound like spoon-feeding or handholding? It is, but it is the kind of help that sets the apprehensive student free after he has been shown how he can succeed; later he succeeds by himself. Don't we do the very same thing when we give piano lessons or when we guide a student making a piece of pottery or building a desk? The first parts have to be generally acceptable, not perfect, before he goes on to the rest. We hold the baby's hand firmly as he takes his first steps, then lightly, but we let go when he brushes our hand aside vigorously because he knows what to do.

Test Room

Wherever students take the quizzes, they should have a quiet work place. I use a separate classroom where one of the tutors has a file of all the quizzes. When a student is ready for a quiz, the other tutors or I briefly check the exercises in that segment to see what he has done. In each unit there are exercises that are very revealing of the student's understanding. We notice whether he has taken the time to check his answers with those given in the book and to make corrections. If he has not, we suggest he do that before he takes the quiz. One young man had printed all his answers very neatly and did not want to make corrections because he would spoil the appearance of the pages! When I asked him how he could study without knowing whether the answers were right or wrong, he was not sure, but he valued a neat book. I showed him how to draw a single line through a wrong answer and write the correction neatly above. I pointed out that this kind of correction would call his attention to the parts that evidently had not been clear to him as he went through the exercises. He reluctantly agreed that the corrections might be helpful as he studied.

When we have decided that the student has completed a unit satisfactorily, we give him a signed form requesting a particular quiz to take to the test room. Without this procedure, I find that students will do only some of the work, request the quiz, and hope they can pass just by chance. They usually have to take the second form and will not do well on it either because they have again avoided studying methodically. By helping them

understand how well they have to prepare themselves for a quiz, we help them learn to study and to gauge when they are really prepared for a quiz.

We keep the quiz room quiet. We do answer questions, but with a minimum of discussion. Students may also use the room to do exercises if they find the discussion room too noisy for them. However, if they want help with lessons, they return to the discussion room to talk with a tutor or me.

If it were possible, I would have even a third room for discussion of tests. At present I try to discuss tests in one area of the room, but often students will return to their seats in another part and talk with their friends about the test. If every one learns as a result of the discussion, I feel we are accomplishing our goal, but unfortunately some are looking only to get a list of answers.

Instructional Aides

An important part of individualized instruction is instructional aides, identified by a variety of labels, none of which specifically tell how the aides function in the classroom. Having them available means that students can get the individual help they need. This is not to say, however, that individualized instruction cannot operate without them. It can if the course materials are well developed, the students are motivated, and the teacher has a limited number to work with. But if the students are "underachievers," they, not the individualized instruction program, set the demand for instructional aides.

My aides, whom I identify as tutors, come from several sources, and they are unpaid, except for my assistant and one tutor. My source when I began my course three years ago was Sacramento State College where a friend of mine organized a tutoring course for credit for both upper division and graduate students at my request. The first year was ideal because I had one tutor for each six to ten students, and only 150 students. But when other community colleges learned about the program and also wanted tutors, I had about half the number. About the same time I discovered that students at American River College who were enrolled in college composition could be satisfactory tutors. At first, I enrolled them in an Independent Studies program for which they received college credit. Last year they enrolled in a course I developed called Teacher Aides in English. I soon learned that my

supply again was limited for two reasons. First, not all students wanted to tutor in my class, but they wanted to work in the paragraph writing course, the composition course, or the reading courses; second, my colleagues decided that they too would like to have tutors in their classes. One result, because the tutors were available, was that three men -- Robert Frew, Richard Guches, and Robert Mehaffy -- beginning their second year on the staff last fall, individualized instruction in their paragraph writing courses. Working as a team, they wrote six units, recently published as *Writer's Workshop,* the first unit of which is a very general review of what I have covered in my course. My students generally do well on the men's first unit if they have completed six of my eight units. The really significant units seem to be coordination and subordination. When the men have had students who could not pass their first unit, they have either sent the students to me, or they have asked the students to purchase my units on coordination and subordination. Instead of waiting for this kind of sorting to take place during this semester, Bob Mehaffy and I wrote a diagnostic test which we and six other instructors administered the first day of class to all students. We will watch the progress of the students who have been shifted as a result of the scores on this test.

As our programs have grown -- during the fall semester the four of us worked with about a thousand students -- we have needed more help. We were able to get some paid tutors through our Tutoring Center. In addition, we have two paid "paraprofessionals"; one works with the three men and one with me. This is a classification of an instructional aide made possible by the California Fong Bill (AB 1171) which permits the use of instructional aides in the classroom with or without a teacher present. The men and I have found our programs strengthened because we have some one we can count on to handle some of the paper work. We are freed to work with the students individually, and we are able to answer the tutors' questions as they arise.

One other source of tutors this year is the University of California, Davis, where the graduate studies adviser has told students about our tutoring program by handing out a brochure I prepared listing our needs and their activities as tutors.

Educational Background of Aides

Although the paid instructional aide should be well educated, tutors do not have to be experts to be competent. In fact, the instructor working with tutors has to realize that he is taking on another kind of student when he acquires a tutor. If he cannot accept the tutor in this way, he will feel the program is not working.

The approach for the tutor is to let him try to function as a teacher and leader with small groups and to learn to relate to students individually. As he is forced to answer questions, to find enough words to explain a point, he quickly realizes what his responsibilities are. Some tutors are very apprehensive for about a month, until they learn how to function. One man, about thirty years old, brought a drop card to me every week for eight weeks because he was sure he was not doing a good job. As I listened each week to his outpouring of his anxieties, he began to see that he was exaggerating the obstacles he was facing. Actually he was very competent, did all the lessons and quizzes very capably, gave clear explanations to students, but he wanted to answer every question without hesitation, without having to consult me. At the end of the semester he thanked me profusely for helping him see his own strength and for accepting him when he was faltering.

As I place students as tutors in other classes, I try to make sure that they have adequate backgrounds for what they will teach. I give my tutors the pretest for the course. If the tutors want to work in the composition or reading courses, I find out whether they have completed these courses themselves. They are much more satisfied with their experience when they are fairly well prepared, and they do not burden the instructor.

Although we have been able to work well with tutors who are only adequately prepared, we find that the paid instructional aide should be very well trained. Both of ours are master's degree candidates in English. As a result, they have had courses like advanced composition and linguistics and are able to grade sentences and paragraphs students originate according to the guidelines we have set. They can be flexible in their approach to what they students have written, and they can talk knowledgeably with students about the papers. They can also answer many of the tutors' questions. In a room of 30 to 50 students each hour there are many, many questions.

Because those with master's degrees are eligible for a two-year teaching credential, we have not hired them as aides. One reason is that they cannot enjoy the status of a regular instructor even though they are qualified to be one. Another reason is that some of our

colleagues feel very threatened by the ideas of having instructional aides in the classroom and believe these people might take over classes and work for much less than the regular instructor receives. They do not realize that the instructor who has organized an effective program and works side-by-side with the aides does not have to worry about take-over because he is there to manage the program and take care of problems as they arise. When he is a working member of the team, every one involved works comfortably and enjoys a mutual sense of accomplishment and camaraderie. If he appears to know what he is doing, the aides look to him for direction and support.

Trouble might develop if the course materials are poorly organized or hard to understand. Then the aides might feel compelled to supplement lessons with their own to satisfy the disgruntled students. If the aides find their materials successful and the students belittle the instructor, both the aides and students might begin to regard the instructor as an intruder. Trouble might also develop if the instructor appears to be aloof. He might actually be uncomfortable with the aides because he does not know how to talk with them and to develop a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom. As the aides relate well to the students, the instructor might resent them as intruders. An instructor who does not relate well to students individually probably should not try to individualize instruction because he will not be able to maintain distance. Individualized instruction forces a teacher to become intimately involved with his aides and his students.

Tutors' Responsibilities

In addition to working with the students in groups or individually, I have asked my tutors to keep journals which I read each week. By writing diary-like accounts, they are forced to make observations to record. In rereading their entries weeks later they begin to see patterns of problems which they could not understand previously.

This semester the tutors will also function as some students' consciences. If the students do not live up to the schedules they have set for themselves, I will assign them to a tutor to whom they will report each week.

So that the tutors can share their experiences, I meet with them as a group for one hour a week. They soon learn as they talk about their apprehensions that others are facing

the same feelings. We also review course materials, and we talk about interpreting test results and then suggesting additional exercises for students to complete.

Attendance

How much time a student should spend in class is highly debatable. According to the college system of recording hours of credit, a student taking a three-unit class should be in class for three hours a week for one semester. California state aid payments for elementary and high schools and community colleges is based on the number of hours the student brings his body to class. As a result of this requirement, many students have learned to dream their way through school, graduate with a D average, and then are surprised, even shocked and offended, when they learn they have to show accomplishment in college. Some of them try to get by with excuses for not attending or not completing assignments and actually expect to get credit for the courses even though they have not accomplished the objectives. If they are allowed to pass, they often complain to the teacher in the subsequent course that the previous teacher had not been too good -- "things" were not clear. Again they try to get by on excuses. By holding these students to accomplishment of the objectives and keeping attendance flexible, they usually discover what their obligations are and actually learn to study.

Because my course gives two units of credit for a nine-week period if the students complete the eight quizzes and final, they are supposed to attend four hours a week to get the right amount of time in. I believe they should work at least four hours a week with tutor help because concentrated effort in skills courses usually brings good response if the student works adequately. However, I do not insist that all students attend four hours every week. Some are highly motivated and work well outside of class. They know when to come in for help, and they set a schedule for themselves for taking the quizzes. Others have class-schedule or job conflicts. They can attend perhaps two or three hours a week, but not four. Excluding them because they cannot attend four hours is unrealistic. Some face unbearable pressures because of personal problems or worries about other classes. They often tell me how appreciative they are because they do not have to keep a definite schedule.

While there are these advantages to this flexibility, it is also what destroys the undisciplined student. He responds to the call of drinking coffee with friends in the Student Center or the pressures of his personal obligations and other classes. Sometimes he drops out of class because he thinks he is too far behind -- by his standards. One way I try to help students follow a schedule without imposing one on them is to have them write down the dates they expect to take each of the quizzes. If they do not take the first one as they had planned, I assign them to tutors who try to find out what problems the students may be having and to help revise the schedule to match their performance and needs. This kind of flexibility has be be maintained if the quizzes are to measure accomplisments, not the speed with which the student works.

It is unrealistic to believe that we can hold any student in class if he sees no need for completing the course. Interestingly, a large number who had dropped last year returned this year because they found they really needed the course.

Even though I do not insist that students attend class four hous a week, I keep close attendance records so that I know by glancing at their cards what their pattern of attendance has been. If they fail to come to class for two weeks, I either send them a personal note or try to call them. If I cannot reach them, I send in a drop card. Often the drop notice from the Records Office brings them back to class, and I am able to talk with them about a realistic work schedule.

Students' Files

As a student enters the class -- he may do this at any time during the semester -- he fills out a Score Sheet (goldenrod yellow), a File Card (blue), and an Attendance Card (yellow). He is given a copy of the Score Sheet and a pink sheet listing my name, office number, office hours, course text, class hours, room schedule, and course objectives.

The Score Sheet is an 8½ x 11 sheet, three-hole punched. On the front are blanks for name, address, and telephone number. On the left below is a chart for entering scores for each of the quizzes. On the right is another chart listing 18 weeks of the semester and three vertical columns of blocks in which the student may write the dates he intends to take each of the eight quizzes and final. The two extra columns are for revised schedules.

On the back of this sheet are listed the numbers of all the lessons in *Commanding Communication*. These are separated into units by the number of the quiz which follows each unit. Two columns of blocks, one headed PRETEST and the other FINAL, run vertically beside these numbers, and they are marked to show the student the lessons he should study after he has taken the Pretest or Final. All items in both tests are coded with lesson numbers. The students fills out one copy of the Score Sheet for me and keeps one for himself. I snap my copies into three-ring binders behind index pages listing the students' names. As they complete tests, my aide or I enter the scores on the Score Sheet, which gives us an inventory of tests taken, and file the tests behind them. I use binders because I have to carry my student files and tests to class on a three-tiered cart. If my class met in one room, I might use manila folders and a metal file cabinet.

Another information source is the blue 3 x 5 File Card on which the student writes his name, address, and telephone number. On the left are listed the quizzes and blanks to enter the scores. On the right are columns for date and course code followed by date and the grade given. The quiz scores I enter once or twice a semester to give a summary of the student's progress. The columns for the date the semester begins and the course code show me how many times the student has enrolled and whether he dropped or received Incomplete. I can also indicate a Placement Test Score if he has taken one. When a student wants to enter the paragraph writing course during the semester, I send a copy of this card to the instructor to give him the student's background.

Attendance records may be kept in a variety of ways. One is to have students sign a roll sheet each time they come to class. The roll sheet I have used is two 8½ x 11 mimeographed sheets divided into three columns with the letters of the alphabet spaced at intervals under which students wrote their names. At the end of the day, their attendance was recorded on their Score Sheets on which I had an attendance chart. This process took about an hour a day for about 150 students.

Another way is to prepare 3 x 5 cards with a place for the student's name at the top and the remainder of the card covered with two vertical columns of five squares representing the days of the week and each horizontal row of squares representing one week of the semester. These I have the students sign as they enter class, and then I place them in a file box. Each time they subsequently come to class, they take their card, write their initials in the block for

that date, and replace the card in the file. So that they know what block to use, I do two things. I keep a calendar with the weeks numbered to correspond to the weeks of the semester and also mark off each date as it passes. In addition, at the end of the day, my aide draws a line across the square for the day if the student has not attended. In this way he uses the appropriate square when he comes the next time, and he cannot fill in days he has missed previously. If he tells me he had attended but failed to sign the attendance card, I write "OK" in the square and initial it. (The tutors also record their attendance on the 3 x 5 cards by writing the number of hours they are in class each day.)

A hidden advantage of this system is that the instructor can get a student to see him merely by pulling the attendance card and holding it until the student asks for it.

This same card system can be used with a time clock, but the cost of the clock seems to be greatly out of proportion to its value, especially since the initialled file card is very satisfactory. The time clock itself seems to negate the flexibility and freedom the class tries to offer.

The Future

Although I have taught this course three years, I continue to make changes in the text, now in its eighth revision, and in record-keeping. Text changes have been necessary to develop a workable sequence of lessons, to eliminate inconsistencies in exercises, and to add or eliminate explanations and examples. Changes in record-keeping result because of the ever-increasing number of students and uncertain supply of tutors. Even with the uncertainties, the system works well if one "hangs loose," as my Hawaiian friend advises, and handles each demand as it becomes apparent. The reward is a continuing feeling of fulfillment and accomplishment. Who can ask for more?